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Uncommon Cause: The Future of the OSCE

Report and Recommendations Global Europe Program Working Group on the Future of the OSCE

Thirty years ago, the leaders of the United States, Canada, the Soviet Union and 31 other European and Eurasian countries buried the Cold War with a remarkable document. In the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, they announced that the “era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended,” and vowed to “build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations.” They declared human rights and fundamental freedoms to be “irrevocable,” the “birthright of all human beings,” and “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.” They pledged to “promote economic activity which respects and upholds human dignity” and to “intensify our endeavors to protect and improve our environment.”

They proclaimed that “security is indivisible,” and committed “to settle disputes by peaceful means.” They expressed their “determination to combat all forms of racial and ethnic hatred, antisemitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds.”¹

These extraordinary commitments symbolized a new beginning for Europe after a century of wars, hot and cold. The continent was “liberating itself from the legacy of the past,” leaders proclaimed. They evoked a more secure, prosperous Europe anchored by shared values and interests. The Charter of Paris gave powerful expression to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s notion of a “common European home”

and U.S. President George H.W. Bush's vision of a Europe that at long last could be "whole and free."

As time marched on, however, this vision became more slogan than project. Achievement failed aspiration. Revisionists grew their influence. Borders were changed by force. Democratic governments have been toppled or weakened from within. Independent media have been suppressed. Shooting wars have erupted. Foreign troops are in countries without invitation. The dangers of military accidents and miscalculations have risen as confidence-building measures and arms control arrangements have fallen. Racial, religious and ethnic hatred are alive and well. As a consequence, the Europe of our hopes again risks becoming the Europe of our fears: less whole and free, more fractious and anxious; less settled and stable, more fluid and turbulent.

The OSCE Under Challenge

This state of distrust and disunity carries important implications for the continent's security institutions, particularly the one intended to give life to the Paris

Charter's promise: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Formally christened in 1994 as guardian of the principles enshrined in the Charter of Paris and its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), based on the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE has played an important if often underrated role in European security.

The OSCE has many unique virtues. While groupings such as NATO and the EU gather state actors in common cause, the OSCE brings together state and non-state actors of uncommon cause, with disparate interests and often-conflicting claims. It is the only pan-European security organization that spans the Euro-Atlantic region and includes the United States, Canada, Russia and other European and Eurasian states as members. It gives voice to small countries and to those that are not tethered to other security organizations. While the OSCE does not provide defense guarantees to any country, it acts as a secondary security insurance policy for many. It commands no military forces yet has contributed to Europe's military security because its



Meeting in the French capital on 19-21 November 1990, the CSCE Heads of State and Government signed the Charter of Paris, a historic document announcing a 'Europe whole and free'. Photo courtesy of: www.osce.org

members of uncommon cause created an extensive regime of confidence-building and transparency measures, verification procedures, and early warning mechanisms that helped to reduce levels of arms and tensions across much of the continent.

OSCE activities reflect the understanding that threats to security today are just as likely to arise from conflicts within states as between them. OSCE field missions have been vital in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. They are the eyes and ears of the international community in trouble spots such as eastern Ukraine and the breakaway region of Transnistria. The OSCE has been engaged in those spaces of Europe where other organizations feared to tread or were not welcomed – places like Chechnya, Tajikistan, Georgia, and North Macedonia. It has devised a broad and flexible array of tools that have allowed it to engage in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in ways that other organizations could not.

The OSCE is aimed at fostering trust not only among governments, but between governments and their own people. OSCE institutions help participating states combat trafficking in drugs, persons, and weapons. They monitor elections, focus attention on issues related to human rights, gender equality, minority rights, democratization, education, and media freedom. For many governmental and non-governmental actors, the OSCE is a place you can turn to when it is not clear where else you can go.

The OSCE faces many challenges. If the early 1990s were its best of times, the early 2020s are arguably its worst. Despite its many positive attributes, the organization's possibilities are a weathervane of gusty relations among its members. Today, the OSCE is hobbled by a lack of strategic understanding between Russia, the West, and the countries straddling the vast spaces of Europe between them. Moscow, which for years had sought to promote the

organization as Europe's primary security institution, now believes the OSCE has been "captured" by the West and is being used as an instrument with which to bash Russia. Western governments and societies submit that Russia has failed to uphold its OSCE commitments, and brazenly violated them with its armed interventions in Georgia in 2008 and in

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Ukraine in 2014. Many "in-between" countries, in turn, are concerned that their own security interests are not being considered, or fearful that Western-Russian security deals might be struck over their heads. These differences are further exacerbated by civil society actors intent on holding many OSCE governments to account for failing to uphold their Charter of Paris commitments.

Moscow has been particularly prickly when it comes to these issues, as evidenced by the fact that anyone in Russia who criticizes the Russian annexation of Crimea could land in jail. Russia is not alone, however, when it comes to questions regarding OSCE commitments. In fact, governments across the full OSCE space are experiencing domestic crises when it comes to their commitments. Throughout Europe's vast eastern spaces, the integrity of countries is threatened as much by internal corruption and their own kleptocratic elites as by economic collapse

or external intervention. Nor are these challenges limited to Europe's east; a number of EU and NATO member states have proven equally susceptible to politicians who undermine democratic processes and the rule of law.

These tensions have poisoned the atmosphere and stymied the organization. Its role as a platform

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for dialogue has deteriorated. Its mechanisms for democratic accountability, freedom of the media, and protection of national minorities have all been weakened. Civil society actors in Europe increasingly prefer taking human rights complaints to the European Court of Human Rights, and Central Asian actors more often turn to the UN Council on Human Rights. Countries are also turning to other venues to tackle money-laundering, drugs, trafficking, and arms control. Six years after the conclusion of the first Minsk agreements, Ukraine and Russia remain at loggerheads. The OSCE's role in facilitating the implementation of the Minsk agreements ran into a stalemate and its Special Monitoring Mission has seen its effectiveness compromised. The organization was also sidelined by Russia and Turkey in their efforts to influence the armed conflict that erupted in the autumn of 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, the OSCE Chair-in-Office for 2020, succinctly summed up the organization's challenges:

"We supposedly have a shared vision — created in Helsinki and continued in Paris, Istanbul and Astana — for a democratic, peaceful and united

*Europe. That vision is moving further away from us. Because our principles are not respected. Because our commitments are not implemented. Because the divergence in our views is growing. Because unilateral is too often chosen over international. Because confrontation is chosen over conversation. And because disruption is chosen over co-operation."*²

Participating states could take any number of institutional steps to make the OSCE more effective. They made an important start in December with the appointment of seasoned diplomat Helga Schmid as Secretary General. They now need to ensure that the organization has sufficient financial support to do its work. Greater access could be granted to non-governmental actors. Selected OSCE Permanent Council meetings could be made open, following the practice of the UN Security Council. While the organization's consensus rule remains important when it comes to central security issues, it could be modified on administrative issues so that the organization can operate more effectively and efficiently. Greater use could be made of the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism, which provides for participating states to raise questions relating to the human dimension situation in other OSCE states and to establish ad hoc missions of independent experts to assist in the resolution of a specific human dimension problem — either on their own territory or in other OSCE participating states. The OSCE's November 2020 Moscow Mechanism report on the situation in Belarus following the country's August elections, for example, is the most comprehensive and detailed documentation of the current human rights crisis in Belarus.

Most of the OSCE's problems, however, are not institutional. They are political. Bureaucratic tweaks can't overcome the lack of commitment by participating states to uphold the Paris and Helsinki principles.

This doesn't mean that the organization can't do valuable work. The current climate, while frosty, is not unprecedented. The OSCE's own origins are rooted in a time of arguably even greater tensions, when the Cold War antagonists came together to manage and contain their confrontation by thrashing out basic principles that could guide their behavior. Those principles, enshrined at Helsinki and Paris and affirmed again in 2010 with the Astana Declaration, still offer a common roadmap for uncommon partners. That is why the sterile debate whether the OSCE should be a platform for dialogue or a platform for accountability offers a false choice. Generating and sustaining a dialogue that is rooted in mutual accountability among state and non-state actors is the dynamic tension that propels the organization. It is its frustration and its promise. That tension could be harnessed to advance security and cooperation in Europe in a number of areas – provided that participating states can regain some modicum of confidence that commitments made will be undertaken in good faith.

Building Confidence and Security Within Societies

1. Lasting peace in Europe depends on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Participating states should launch a review process to assess their respective commitments to the Helsinki, Paris and Astana principles. Between 1975 and 1990, the Review Conference format gave life to the CSCE's work. Since the CSCE has become the OSCE, accountability reviews have been replaced by stylized speeches and recriminations in the Permanent Council. Bureaucratic processes have overwhelmed essential political concerns. Human Dimension implementation meetings, Security Review conferences and Economic Dimension reviews take place annually, but are held independently, thus reinforcing the growing siloed nature of the OSCE's work. The value of a Review Conference is that it knits the three dimensions more closely together; this integrated approach to security and



Voters names are checked against the voters list at an OSCE-run polling station in Zvečan/Zvečan, 20 May 2012. Photo courtesy of: www.osce.org

cooperation has been a traditional OSCE strength that has gone lagging.

The last review took place a decade ago; it is time to consider this type of “internal audit” once more.

2. State and non-state actors should be able to turn to the OSCE as a preferred institution of choice when it comes to building confidence and security within societies. This work includes election monitoring, conflict prevention and resolution, efforts to address respect for human rights, gender equality, rights of minorities, media freedom and the rule of law, fighting trafficking and corruption, promoting arms control/verification, and working to define additional principles of behavior in a world of rapid change. This work is what the OSCE has always done best, but it has become more challenging. It is useful to review how the organization can deploy experts in elections, law, media, administration and policing more rapidly for more effective conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

OSCE activities can also be a seedbed for actions taken by individual OSCE participating states and non-state actors. The Moscow Mechanism report on Belarus, for example, contains 65 recommendations addressed to the governing authorities in Belarus. Since the current government in Minsk refuses to cooperate with the OSCE on this initiative, it is unlikely to implement those recommendations. OSCE institutions, however, can continue to draw attention to the concerns expressed in the report, including with other bodies. In addition, OSCE participating states, especially the 17 states that invoked the Moscow Mechanism, should consider how they can incorporate the report’s conclusions into their policies toward Belarus, focusing on what is needed and less about what is currently feasible. The opportunity may arise for the OSCE to engage in Belarus in ways it cannot right now. That might

mean reopening the OSCE mission that Minsk had closed, facilitating an accountability process, and assisting Belarus in organizing fresh elections in accordance with OSCE standards.³

Translating Principles into Practice: The OSCE’s Field Operations

3. The OSCE’s field operations translate its principles into practice. Today, they can be an important instrument of conflict prevention and mitigation when it comes to tensions over Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Their effectiveness, however, is under challenge.

Ukraine has become a major test of the OSCE’s capabilities and its future relevance. On the one hand, the OSCE’s Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine and the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk have filled important roles. Even during

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the bitterest days surrounding Russia’s 2014 intervention in Ukraine, Moscow, Kyiv and the other OSCE parties agreed on a mandate for the SMM and the Observer Mission because no side wanted to close off the option of using the OSCE and its instruments. While the deployment of the SMM has assisted in containing the conflict, continuing differences have meant that the SMM has only partially been able to fulfill its mandate to monitor and report, and the Observer Mission has been unable to monitor and verify on both sides of the Ukrainian-Russian border or to create a security



Two monitors patrolling in the Donetsk region to assess the general security situation. Photo courtesy of: www.osce.org

zone in the border areas of Russia and Ukraine.⁴ These missions should be allowed to perform these tasks. Local elections in the regions should be carried out in line with OSCE standards and be monitored by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). As long as the conditions for free and fair elections under OSCE rules are not possible, OSCE should not be used to legitimize the separatists. Access to the Crimean Peninsula should be given to ODIHR and the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), without them having to enter via Russia.

The OSCE has been equally tested in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The OSCE's Minsk Group has sought for decades to find a sustainable solution to the dispute, with little result.⁵ Even though the OSCE long ago devised a detailed plan for a peacekeeping/interpositioning force in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the parties involved continuously prevented adoption of this plan. Azerbaijan and Armenia each closed their respective OSCE offices. When armed conflict

erupted between the parties this fall, the OSCE was further sidelined by a joint Russian-Turkish monitoring center.

Despite these setbacks, status issues remain unresolved, more fighting has broken out despite the formal cessation of hostilities, and the potential for wider conflict remains. The consequences of the crisis will be with us for years to come. Russia and Turkey may have an interest in sharing responsibility for maintaining the peace with other international players. They may want to come back to the OSCE for a final settlement with additional guarantees, since the Minsk Group remains the only internationally recognized and legitimate body to deal with the problem. Russia's joint statement with its Minsk Group Co-Chairs, the United States, and France, in December 2020 affirmed a united position to engage constructively with Azerbaijan and Armenia to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and to resolve outstanding issues. As OSCE Chair in 2021 and as a member of the Minsk Group, Sweden could play a role by hosting the parties in Stockholm.



Danish jets accompany a Russian An-30 aircraft during an observation flight under the Open Skies Treaty over the territory of Denmark. Photo courtesy of: www.osce.org

Additional conflict-prevention challenges on the ground will also arise. Where territory is changing hands, people who previously lived on different sides of the divide will now live side by side. Reconciliation efforts will be vital, as will measures aimed at normalizing those people's lives. While OSCE members will want to be careful not to give any impression that the current situation is an internationally-sanctioned settlement, a status-neutral OSCE field presence with access to the disputed territories could offer value. The OSCE could help facilitate an exchange of detainees, prisoners of war, and the remains of those killed during the recent fighting, in close cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross. In addition, even though Russia has taken on peacekeeping duties, the Minsk Group's High-Level Planning Group should continue its efforts to plan for a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force, and consider the modalities for a multinational civilian OSCE-led monitoring mission, as over time Moscow may not want to bear the costs and burdens it has now incurred alone.

Repairing Europe's Conventional Arms Control Framework

4. Europe's conventional arms control regime has been one of the OSCE's signature contributions. Today, however, all three pillars of the interlocking web of agreements that made up Europe's conventional arms control framework have been degraded.

First, the regime governing conventional forces – the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the follow-on 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty – is in limbo due to differences over their provisions and disagreements about other commitments.

Second, the 1990 Vienna Document, an agreement among 57 OSCE states that codified militarily significant and verifiable confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) to enhance transparency, exchange military information, provide on-site inspections and notifications of certain types of military activities, has not been revised since 2011.

Third, the Trump administration took the United States out of the 1992 Open Skies Treaty in

November 2020, and Russia announced its intention to quit in January 2021, yet has not yet submitted formal notification. The treaty was designed to enhance mutual understanding, build confidence, and promote openness and transparency of military forces and activities by providing for unarmed aerial observation flights over the entire territory of its 34 signatories. More than 1,500 flights have been flown under the treaty after it took effect in 2002.

Specific elements of the old conventional arms control regime may indeed be obsolete, not only because countries have walked away from them, but because of technological and military progress. Nonetheless, the core principles that informed these arrangements – transparency, confidence-building and reducing fear of surprise – need to be embedded in a whole new political-military framework.

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Given current tensions, there is no consensus behind such an effort. Yet efforts to reduce the risk of military accidents or incidents are not favors that participating states offer to others, they are in each state's own self-interest. Major differences over Syria, for instance, did not stop the United States and Russia from agreeing to an Air Safety Protocol to reduce the risk of air collisions and conflict between Russian and U.S.-led coalition aircraft over Syrian territory. Similar initiatives between Russia and NATO, or more broadly under the auspices of the OSCE or other bodies, could help to tame competition and prevent confrontation

without acquiescing to the other side's objectives. In this regard, a number of steps are conceivable.

First, the Biden administration could bring the United States back into the Open Skies Treaty. Russia has indicated it would consider staying in the treaty if the U.S. rejoins.

The hurdle to overcome is the fact that ratification in the U.S. Senate, which is needed for the U.S. to rejoin the treaty, requires 67 votes. The Democrats have 50, and are unlikely to secure 17 additional votes from the Republicans after the Trump administration left the treaty. Mechanisms would have to be developed to enable the U.S. to reassociate itself with the obligations, responsibilities and benefits of the treaty. This is not likely to be easy, but there is precedent, namely bilateral arrangements regarding overflights after the 1992 signing of the Treaty and 2002, when the Treaty entered into force.

Despite technological advances, the Open Skies Treaty still offers advantages. The imagery of military installations and activities gathered by unarmed aerial surveillance is made available to all treaty-parties, thus fostering transparency and building confidence. Aerial surveillance is more flexible than satellite imagery and can fly under cloud cover.⁶

Second, a new push should be made to update the Vienna Document, to lower thresholds for notification and international observation of military exercises, to raise quotas for such inspections, to review categories for information exchange, to revise the definition of 'unusual military activities.' Expanded discussions, including among militaries, could address the potentially destabilizing security effects of new technologies.⁷

Third, even though a renewed CFE Treaty seems unlikely at present, it would be useful to engage in a discussion of elements that could be considered as

part of an updated and comprehensive conventional arms control regime. A beginning could be made with an initiative to discuss participating states' understandings of strategic stability. Such talks would need to be broad, open, and wide-ranging at the outset, proceeding to specifics as participating actors uncover areas of agreement on concerns and approaches. This approach follows the logic of the original negotiations that began in Geneva in 1973 and ultimately led to the Helsinki Final Act. Participants at that time knew they wanted to reduce Cold War tensions, but they were not sure how they collectively could do so.

Strategic stability talks could renew the OSCE's potential as an incubator of security innovation, a place where those of uncommon cause can elicit norms of behavior when it comes to Europe's new security frontiers. Such discussions might usefully incorporate the following considerations.

Defining Principles for New Security Challenges

Resilience – Shared and Forward

5. Societies across the OSCE space face unconventional security challenges that had not been anticipated when participating states first gathered almost a half-century ago to thrash out principles to guide their behavior. Corrosive cyber operations, dis- and misinformation on social media, disruptions to supply chains, and the COVID-19 pandemic have each underscored that essential flows of people, goods, services, transportation, food, money and ideas that power societies are increasingly susceptible to disruption. There is growing need to define resilience principles that can guide behavior when it comes to anticipating, preventing and, if necessary, protecting against and bouncing forward from disruptions to critical societal functions.

Ensuring the resilience of one's society is foremost a task for national governments. Resilience begins at home. Nonetheless, no nation is home alone in an age of potentially catastrophic terrorism, networked threats and disruptive hybrid attacks. Country-by-country approaches to resilience are important but insufficient in a world where few critical infrastructures are limited to national borders and where robust resilience efforts by one country may mean little if its neighbor's systems are weak. Moreover, while resilience has commonly been associated with protection of infrastructure networks and civil preparedness, it should also include considerations of societal resilience, i.e., the ability of society to maintain rule of law, respect for human rights, and democratic principles in the face of disruptive challenges. Social cohesion within a given country can also be

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affected by flows of goods, services, money, data, energy, or people.

Governments accustomed to protecting their territories must now also focus on protecting their connectedness.⁸ OSCE efforts to address connectivity issues were energized during Germany's time as Chair-in-Office in 2016. The focus at the time was to infuse economic connectivity with good governance principles.⁹ Since then, it has become clearer that denser cross-border connectivities can also generate greater vulnerabilities to critical societal functions. The OSCE could now turn its attention to how challenges of "connectivity security" are changing our understanding of resiliency requirements.

In this regard, greater consideration should be given to the premise that lasting security in this age of deep interconnections means that resilience must be *shared*, and that it must be projected *forward*. Considerations of “shared” and “forward” resilience could guide efforts such areas as security sector reform, police and gendarmerie training, public health-biosecurity measures, civilian control of the military, and economic development. Participating states could share principles and procedures to improve societal resilience to corruption, psychological and information warfare, and intentional or natural disruptions to cyber, financial and energy networks and other critical infrastructures.

Effective resilience requires engagement by the private sector, which owns most infrastructures critical to essential societal functions, and by private citizens, who are major users of those infrastructures, and who are most affected by weak societal resilience. A good first step would be to build further on OSCE efforts to coordinate with private entities on key resilience issues.

Netflow Security

6. Defining principles for shared and forward resilience is a touchstone to an even more profound challenge: supplementing principles to manage traditional territorial security issues with those to address flow security—protecting the critical links that bind societies to one another. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt made the case already a decade ago:

In this age of accelerating globalization, the true security of our societies, or its citizens, economy and state institutions, is to a very large extent a function of the security of the flows across borders, of the securities of all of those flows of persons, goods, capital, energy, information, whether it be digital or otherwise, that flows across nations, regions and the globe; that is the core of the process of globalization. To secure all of these flows all the way naturally requires a high degree of collaboration; national security is no longer enough.¹⁰



Participants of OSCE-organized Border Management and Threat Assessment training course during a platoon tactical march field exercise at the Imamnazar border checkpoint on the Turkmen-Afghan border, 24 April 2015. Photo courtesy of: www.osce.org

“Without necessarily making territorial security less important,” he added, “I would argue that “flow security” is the true challenge for the decades to come.”¹¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a dramatic example of the rapidly increasing scale and complexity of critical economic, technological and human flows, as well as the dependency of many societies on such flows. They are diffusing and spreading so that they now transcend the state on a significant scale, in terms of both volume and power. Increasingly they are fueled by digital flows, which have become essential for the proper functioning of the supernetwork of flows that transports goods, services, resources, people, food, medicines, money, data and ideas across the globe. Even as the acceleration of digital payments, digital trade, and data transfers generate new opportunities, they also create new dependencies. They can introduce viruses, both tangible and virtual, that can endanger human lives and critical societal functions. These viruses may be unseen, unheard and borderless. Unless they are safely verified, they can shut down trade, stock

markets and banks. They can mean cities without power, transportation or water. Moreover, global ecological flows for the first time are critically affected by human activity.¹²

These networked flows are becoming the world’s operating system, the plumbing that channels what we need to where we need it, the values that inform it, the principles that make it work, the standards that make it safe, and the models of production and service that render it effective and efficient. They are the new territories of networked geopolitics.¹³ The interplay among power, interdependence and innovation has become much more dynamic and fluid, as both regular and unstable flows become more significant and as key nodal points shift and change. State and non-state actors alike can enhance their power by positioning themselves as central hubs or key relay nodes that can understand, foster, manage, influence, channel and even manipulate such defining global flows as trade, resources, or finance. The nature and degree of an actor’s ability to channel netflows is becoming a crucial indicator of that actor’s relative security, economic viability and political influence.¹⁴



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These connections now rippling across Eurasia and the world are likely to have profound implications for how societies define their security. Over time, countries once deemed to be “central” in terms of territorial-based security could become “peripheral” in the netflow world, and regions seen as “peripheral” could become central nodes in the dense interconnections being built all across the OSCE space and beyond.

Netflow risks do not supplant territorially-oriented challenges; they supplement them. In some cases, they may even aggravate them. The ability of non-state actors to wreak havoc on states and societies adds additional complexity. The possibility of highly dynamic and potentially sudden changes of or movements along key nodal points, and in the flows that they send and receive, render contemporary notions of stability less state-centric and static and more netflow-centric and dynamic.¹⁵ Civil society will define this new world of security as much as governments will.

New forms of network behavior will generate new methods and structures of confrontation and competition. This is why it is so important to focus on the values and principles that should guide behavior when it comes to the operating of these networks. Exploring these shifting dynamics is the first step toward limiting the risks they pose and taking advantage of the opportunities they present. Making sense of these new security, economic and political intersections is a huge task, because we don't even have the words to describe what is going on. We will need to re-engineer concepts of statecraft and diplomatic and conflict management tools designed for an earlier era. The OSCE offers a potential platform to do this.

Principled Security

The OSCE today is a shadow of its former self. Supporters of the organization are disconsolate;

many say that at this time of deep distrust and political upheaval it would be inconceivable to reach agreement again on the Helsinki and Paris principles. Ongoing disputes over how well countries have implemented their existing obligations have impaired initiatives aimed at exploring additional responsibilities and commitments.

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It is reasonable to question whether new principles could be developed when current commitments are not being upheld. Yet it is useful to recall that the Helsinki Final Act took two years to negotiate, success was not preordained, and the talks were on the verge of failure multiple times. The fifteen years between Helsinki and Paris was a time of struggle, and the Paris Charter was also the result of two years of intensive diplomacy to bring the Cold War to a peaceful end. The very essence of the process has been to build confidence and manage confrontation at times of deep distrust and political upheaval. The history of the OSCE has been the history of difference. That is not an argument to stop drawing on its tools, it is an argument for more effective diplomacy.

There is value in an organization of uncommon cause. The continent's diversity and historic rivalries remain determining aspects of efforts to achieve a Europe whole, free and at peace. Just as the sources of instability in Europe are varied, so too must be our responses. We must equip ourselves with a wide variety of tools and relay on a variety of structures to address the concerns of vastly different states and peoples.¹⁶ However great their importance, NATO

and the EU were never designed to be universal organizations. The security architecture of Europe also requires a broader structure which provides both a roof under which all countries can discuss basic goals and methods of security, and a foundation of values upon which such discussions can be based. The principles enshrined at Helsinki, Paris and Astana form that foundation; the OSCE offers the roof.

Efforts to raise the OSCE's profile will fail if done for the sake of profile alone. Organizations rarely drive issues; issues drive organizations. Countries and peoples across the OSCE space are facing

both conventional and unconventional challenges to their security. They are experimenting with new tools of influence and struggling with novel measures of power. The OSCE remains a platform in which the unlike-minded could explore rules of the road in areas of security that remain relatively unexplored – if they choose to do so. If they do not, future security principles will be defined elsewhere. That the institution may wither as a result should concern us less than the danger that the Helsinki and Paris principles could lose their normative force. Those principles remain the driver of security and cooperation in Europe. They are worth saving.

The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the authors.

This report is the result of discussions among participants in the Global Europe Program's Working Group on the Future of the OSCE. It is endorsed by the following individuals in their personal capacity. Views do not necessarily reflect those of any institution or organization.

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ENDNOTES

1. Charter of Paris for A New Europe, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/6/39516.pdf>.
2. "Time "to turn the corner" and emerge from the crisis in co-operation, says OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Rama at opening of Tirana Ministerial Council," OSCE, December 3, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/472398>.
3. See the November 5, 2020 statement by the Civic Solidarity Platform, <https://www.civicsolidarity.org/article/1700/osce-moscow-mechanism-report-respect-belarus-international-community-should-undertake>. Necessary changes in the electoral system are already available in the reports by several previous OSCE election observation missions in Belarus.
4. The Minsk agreement (Protocol of 05/09/14, Art. 4), foresees "permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border and verification by the OSCE, together with the creation of a safety zone in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation."
5. The OSCE Minsk Group is co-chaired by Russia, the United States, and France, and includes Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the OSCE Troika. In 1992, the CSCE called for an international conference in Minsk to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The conference was never held; the Minsk Group was created in its place.
6. See Steven Pifer, "Saving the Open Skies Treaty," Brookings Institution, January 27, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/01/27/saving-the-open-skies-treaty/>; Wolfgang Richter, "Open Skies Treaty in Gefahr," SWP, February 2021, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/open-skies-vertrag-in-gefahr/>.
7. For current debates, see the Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on NATO-Russia Military Risk Reduction in Europe, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/8-2a-Russia-NATO-Statement-Final-Draft.pdf> and James Sherr and Martin Hunt, "Initial Reflections on the Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on NATO-Russia Military Risk Reduction in Europe," International Centre for Defence and Security, <https://icds.ee/en/initial-reflections-on-the-recommendations-of-the-participants-of-the-expert-dialogue-on-nato-russia-military-risk-reduction-in-europe/>.
8. See Erik Brattberg and Daniel S. Hamilton, eds., *Global Flow Security: A New Security Agenda for the Transatlantic Community in 2030* (Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2014), especially the chapter by Tomas Ries, "Global Flow Security: A Conceptual Framework."
9. See, for example, Stefan Wolff, "Economic Diplomacy and Connectivity What Role for the OSCE?" Institute for Conflict, Co-operation and Security University of Birmingham, 2018, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/government-society/iccs/news-events/2018/Osce-Report.pdf>.
10. Carl Bildt, speech at the IISS, London, December 1, 2010.
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13. Mika Aaltola, "Flow Security in the Digital Age," in Brattberg and Hamilton, eds., op. cit.; Joseph Verbovsky, "Networked Geopolitics," *American Academy*, <https://www.americanacademy.de/networked-geopolitics/>.
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15. See the essays sponsored by the American Academy in Berlin: Eberhard Sandschneider, "Drivers of Global Change," <https://www.americanacademy.de/drivers-global-change/>; Liberal Values and the Tech Revolution: A Q & Q With Judy Dempsey, <https://www.americanacademy.de/liberal-values-tech-revolution/>.
16. See Richard C. Holbrooke, "America, a European Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1995, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/1995-03-01/america-european-power>.

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